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The Factional Factor in Chinese Politics

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A Research Paper

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A Research Paper

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Summary

Information available as of 14 September 1984 was used in this report.

The existence of factions within the Chinese Communist Party is clearly a source of much of the political instability that has beset China for decades. With deep roots in Chinese history and political culture, factions are a traditional and proven part of political conflict. They emerge in times of crisis and weak leadership, and have a paralyzing effect on the political system until the effective distribution of power is resolved. China's factional proclivities are exacerbated by a Leninist one-party system that leaves no room for loyal opposition.

The Chinese recently have begun to address the issue of factionalism in their political system. In the past few months, the official media have discussed factionalism in detail, especially as it affects the lower levels of China's various bureaucracies. Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang, after several tours through the provinces, called on all areas to "eradicate" factionalism, as part of the process of cleansing the party and reforming the political system.

In response, many provinces have begun to publicize their factional problems with unprecedented frankness. We believe that this new information, when added to what we already know about high-level politics, now provides sufficient grounds for making some judgments about the effect of factionalism on the current leadership and its policies. Our conclusions are necessarily speculative because the information is still fragmentary and leaves much room for variant interpretations:

- We believe that factionalism—the propensity to divide into exclusive groups loyal to specific individuals for the purpose of political conflict—currently is a latent, not manifest problem in the Central Committee. This is due to the political strength of Deng Xiaoping, the relative homogeneity of the Politburo, and rough consensus at the top on general policies and the rules of the political game.

- Factional considerations presently play a limited role in the formulation of policies in China, particularly foreign policy. Foreign policy is determined by a small group of the most senior leaders—dominated by Deng—who consider China's foreign policy primarily in geopolitical terms. In domestic policy, factionalism has been muted in part because Deng has shifted decisionmaking to the smaller, younger party Secretariat.

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- US-China relations thus are somewhat insulated from the push and pull of Chinese domestic politics, though not completely so. Some Chinese occasionally have played on Western concerns about Politburo factionalism to gain advantage in working out bilateral problems.

- Factionalism may emerge in a post-Deng era, as survivors and successors compete for his power. Deng has controlled factionalism but has not eliminated its causes. General Secretary Hu Yaobang is gaining prestige and authority, but there are still several other party veterans capable of leading formidable factions to counter him.

- The current campaign against factionalism will probably score limited success in overcoming local factional problems, but it will not resolve the system's fundamental susceptibility to factional infighting.

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Contents

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Scope Note

The behavior of political factions within the Chinese Communist Party has long been a controversial subject among Western analysts and scholars of China. Generally, the scarcity of reliable information on political interactions in this secrecy-shrouded regime has made it difficult for the intelligence and academic communities to develop a thorough understanding of the dynamics of politics at the Central Committee and Politburo level. Lacking clear definitions or conceptual precision, factionalism has become a type of analytical "fudge factor": its relevance to the real political process often is more assumed than analyzed, and it is frequently held responsible for the occasional sudden shifts in Chinese foreign or domestic policy that defy conventional analysis or confuse Western observers.

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China's tumultuous political history over the last three decades lends itself easily to analysis along factional lines. Ever since Mao Zedong launched the Great Leap Forward in 1958, China has been a country of sweeping policy and personnel changes, of government by conspiracy and coup, of intense political polarization and vicious infighting. Even though the current situation, by comparison, is orderly and quiet, analytic habits acquired over several years of observing political instability and fluidity have disposed analysts to doubt official claims of a "new situation of unprecedented unity and stability" in China, and to look for factionalism beneath the surface tranquillity. This paper is an attempt to come to grips with some of the analytical problems involved in defining and assessing factionalism. It addresses questions of how pervasive factionalism is in Chinese society, under what conditions factions develop, how they affect policy decisions, and how they can be controlled.

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The Factional Factor in Chinese Politics

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Definitions and Concepts

The term "faction" (*pai*) is used commonly, but somewhat loosely, in the Chinese language to describe any identifiable group in a political context. It is generally attached to the end of a descriptive term or name. Thus the term has been used to define groups of "reactionaries" (*fandong pai*), or the "left wing" (*zuo pai*) of a larger party; one can be labeled a "Dengist" (*Deng pai*) or a "capitalist roader" (*zou zi pai*), or a member of the "whatever faction" (*fan shi pai*) associated with former party Chairman Hua Guofeng. Individuals so designated in this popular form of political stereotyping may not agree with the designation.

A more precise definition is needed, however, for the purposes of analysis of factionalism as a factor in current Chinese politics. In the discussion that follows, a faction is understood to be a group of individuals *bound by strong personal ties to a particular leader*, consciously engaged in competitive, goal-oriented political action. Its primary goals are the enhancement of power and security for constituent members. Factional activity refers to conscious political choices intended primarily for the benefit of one faction or to damage other perceived factions. These run the gamut from preferential appointments and promotions to a wide variety of negative activities directed at factional opponents, from minor harassment to incarceration or murder.

Factions arise from, but are not equal to, the networks of informal relationships and personal ties that are referred to in China as *guanxi*.[1] Factions tend to arise in situations of political uncertainty or irresolute authority, either as a defense against attack by hostile political forces, or as a means of acquiring political power. Power in China accrues to individuals, not offices, and a faction leader is one who is perceived to have personal power sufficient to provide for his supporters. Given its concentration on individuals, rather than issues or offices, factional activity tends to generate intense political animosities and lasting personal hatreds.

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One of the paradoxical characteristics of factionalism in China is that it is viewed with near-universal opprobrium. As in any Leninist party, factionalism in the Chinese Communist Party is considered a grave violation of the "rules of the game," which call for collective decisionmaking and discipline through "democratic centralism." Equally important, factionalism has been anathema to Chinese political theorists from Confucius to Mao. A consistent strain in Chinese political philosophy is the idealization of a harmonious and unified leadership, maintaining legitimacy through commitment to and exemplary practice of moral virtues. The idea of banding together to compete for power or personal gain is abhorrent, prima facie evidence that the individuals concerned are evil and unworthy of leadership.

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The accusation of factionalist behavior, then, carries considerable pejorative weight, and this sharply limits the scope for legitimate political conflict in modern China. Factionalism is pure power politics, but since that is considered improper, the losers of a political struggle are usually accused of factionalism, as if that alone were the cause of their downfall. Mao invariably so charged his fallen opponents,[2] and even the Gang of Four, despite abundant evidence of their involvement in murder and vast abuse of power, were tried and convicted primarily on charges of "leading a counterrevolutionary clique."

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[1] *Guanxi* means, literally, "relationship," but in a sociopolitical context, it has extensive connotations. *Guanxi* refers to mutual obligations between two individuals, based upon family, school, work unit, region, or other association. It is the channel through which things get done in China—it is "who you know." It is the glue which binds factions together; *guanxi* can thrive without factionalism, but factionalism cannot exist without *guanxi*.

[2] A list of Mao's primary opponents and their "crimes" would include: Gao Gang and Rao Shushi, purged in 1954 for forming "an antiparty alliance"; Peng Dehuai, Huang Kecheng, and others, dismissed in 1959 for forming an "antiparty military clique"; and Lin Biao and his General Staff, branded after their 1971 fall as "a counterrevolutionary clique."

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Factionalism and the Cultural Revolution

Although its most violent phase ended 15 years ago, and the entire era was declared over with the purge of the Gang of Four in 1976, the Cultural Revolution still permeates political life in China to a remarkable degree. The leadership, and particularly Hu Yaobang, seems obsessed with it: rectification is intended to purge the party of its influence, and cadre are still being charged with crimes committed during that era. In many other cases, people are trying to recover property, reputations or family members lost during the "10 years of chaos," or avenge themselves against former persecutors.

Factionalism is in no small part responsible for the perpetuation of the problems created during the Cultural Revolution. In its most turbulent phase, 1967-69, social order collapsed in many areas of the country. A multitude of political factions, all claiming allegiance to Chairman Mao, struggled for power at every level with escalating ferocity. Thousands died in sectarian violence that in some places involved heavy artillery and armored vehicles stolen from military arsenals. With the help of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), order was finally restored, violent Red Guard youth were shipped off to rural exile, and the party began to reconstruct its shattered organizations. But because no clear winners had emerged, the new "revolutionary committees" often were composed of roughly equal numbers from opposing factions, with Beijing-designated PLA officers holding real power. As the Army withdrew from political life over the next few years, the factions continued their competition for power and revenge, though in a somewhat less violent manner.

Factionalism in the Politburo exacerbated problems below. Increasingly hostile groups in the Central Committee jockeyed for power and intrigued against each other, with the denouement occurring after Mao's death in 1976. This turbulence was amply reflected at lower levels; political change at the top brought renewed struggle at lower levels, with directives and propaganda slogans serving as openings for shifting power and arresting opponents. Moreover, local factionalism took on a life of its own, persisting in many areas without direct support from, and even in defiance of, Beijing. Feuds dating from the Cultural Revolution have delayed or distorted implementation of Deng's political and economic reforms, despite massive personnel changes ordered by Beijing. It was this linkage of low-level policy opposition to Cultural Revolution factionalism that evidently led Deng and Hu to confront the factionalism issue directly. 25X1

The Problem as the Party Sees It

The party leadership, however, has been revising its assessment of factionalism as it has begun to realize how deeply the problem is rooted in society. Judging by the "Decision on Consolidation," adopted by a party plenum in October 1983, factionalism was equated in practice with political opposition, and factionalists were among the "three types of people" to be removed from office during the party rectification campaign.[3] According to the communique, those afflicted by factionalism "use their faction as the line of demarcation and appoint people by favoritism while elbowing out of their way those who hold different views; they form cliques to pursue selfish interests, seriously impairing the unity and solidarity of the party and hindering the party from carrying out its line, principles, and policies." A product of the Cultural Revolution and "leftist" ideology, factional behavior, in the view of Deng and his reformist supporters, was small group behavior in opposition to the established goals of the regime. 25X1 25X1

More recently, the party seems to have recognized that the association of factionalism with leftist opposition was not always accurate or helpful in carrying out party rectification. Investigations of various problem-ridden leadership groups evidently showed that factional animosities existed within the reformist wing of the party itself, between the local party leadership and the PLA, or even within the PLA itself—and in 25X1

[3] The other two "types" to be excluded from leadership positions are those who rose dramatically during the Cultural Revolution on the basis of "rebel" activities, and those who engaged in "beating, smashing, and looting" during that era. 25X1 25X1

General Secretary Hu: Initiator of campaign to eradicate factionalism.

none of these cases was the charge of leftist oppositionism appropriate. In late May, party leaders, and especially Hu Yaobang, shifted gears somewhat, and phased into party rectification work an education campaign to portray factionalism as a consequence of the Cultural Revolution that can afflict even officials with the "correct" political orientation.

The logic of Hu's campaign is relatively simple: factions are a product of the Cultural Revolution; the Cultural Revolution was totally wrong; therefore, *all* factions were wrong then, and are wrong now. No faction can insist that it pursued a "correct" political or ideological line, nor can the PLA claim its support for one faction or another was correct. All should recognize their errors, engage in self-criticism, hold "heart-to-heart talks" with their adversaries, and let bygones be bygones. Interestingly, the most thorough and authoritative exposition of this approach to the problem was contained in the 28 July issue of the PLA newspaper, *Jiefangjun Bao.*

We believe, however, that the campaign to "negate the Cultural Revolution" and eliminate factionalism is more than just a mild phase in the party's rectification campaign. The evidence presented in the publicity campaign indicates that factionalism is a serious problem at every level of society, and that it presents a clear danger to the party's ability to rule and refurbish its tarnished image. In our view, the national campaign against factionalism also has implications for politics at the center. 25X1

Factionalism in the Politburo—Image and Reality

Western analysts tend to disagree on the importance of factionalism in current Politburo politics. There are those who see factional alignments and infighting everywhere, or who attribute any evidence of policy disagreement within the leadership to a factional fight. Taiwan's "China watchers" also appear to take this approach. 25X1

We believe that the conceptual framework is crucial to analyzing Chinese politics at the Central Committee level. As in any political system, the Chinese leadership is subject to a variety of cleavages and categorizations, some of which are regarded—erroneously, we believe—as the basis for factionalism. For example, some observers see generational differences as being paramount, and view Deng as head of an "old cadres faction." Others see factions based on attitudinal positions, such as a "pragmatist faction" or an "opposition faction." Some analysts see factions based on policy positions, such as a "heavy industry faction" or "pro-Soviet faction," while others have looked at past bureaucratic assignments as the basis of factions like a "Third Field Army faction" or a "China Youth League faction." 25X1 25X1 25X1

Although these are fruitful areas for investigation, they are of limited value in explaining political dynamics at the upper levels of the Central Committee. Interest groups, bureaucratic associates, and "old boy networks" do exist in the Chinese political system and do have an impact on the development of policy. They often form the basis of "*guanxi* networks" that can develop into factions under some circumstances. They should not be confused with factions, however. Factions are cohesive, personalistic, and power oriented; they are perceived as a threat to the political order; they are political battle groups. 25X1 25X1

We believe that available evidence supports the conclusion that factionalism is now a latent, not a manifest, problem in the national party leadership. Compared with those periods when factionalism was clearly operating and was recognized by the Chinese for what it was—that is, the 1972-76 period between the death of Lin Biao and the purge of the Gang of Four—the absence of evidence of factionalism in the current Politburo is striking. Although there are serious policy disputes within the Politburo, as well as personal rivalries and scores to be settled, the situation, in our judgment, is well below the point where any of the principals may feel obliged to draw together a faction to do battle. Furthermore, we believe that there are now specific institutional constraints against factionalism, some of them attributable to actions and policies undertaken by Deng Xiaoping.

Deng Xiaoping: Effectively dominates the party Politburo.

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Mitigating Conditions

Several characteristics of the current leadership make it less prone to factionalization than any leadership group in China since the 1950s. These act as constraints on the Chinese inclination toward factionalism:

- *Relative homogeneity of the Politburo.* The purge of the Gang of Four and the "winnowing" of the Politburo since that time has resulted in the virtual elimination of the extremist elements that precipitated earlier factional struggles. The current Politburo is a collection of moderate party bureaucrats committed to economic progress and orderly politics. They are experienced in getting things done by pulling the right bureaucratic strings. Although claims of "unity and stability" need not be taken at face value, it would appear that this Politburo has less to fight about than most of its predecessors.

- *Deng's domination.* Deng Xiaoping's control of the central decisionmaking apparatus is nearly unchallenged. By virtue of his political skills, policy initiatives, and extensive bureaucratic contacts, he has managed to sidestep, co-opt, or eliminate opposition and establish himself as the ultimate authority figure in the regime. He has prevented others from taking collusive action against him, and he has avoided the appearance of factionalism in confronting his own opponents. In such an environment of confident authority, careful attention to the opinions of other party leaders, and fair allocation of power, factionalism has not been able to flourish.

- *Ideological/procedural consensus.* Nearly all current Politburo members share a revulsion against the kind of cutthroat factional infighting that characterized the Cultural Revolution. The leadership seems committed to orderly rules of political interaction, especially the prohibition on factions. Deng Xiaoping, although he thoroughly dominates the political scene, has tended to avoid the appearance of organizing a factional battle against his opponents and has eschewed subjecting them to extreme humiliation or disgrace.

- *Crosscutting loyalties and the distribution of power.* Under Deng, the political process in China has become somewhat more decentralized. Important policy issues get decided at various levels of various bureaucracies—power is more diffuse than it has been previously. Moreover, the policymaking process is more open. Alternative views can be aired and disagreements can be expressed without one's political loyalty or ideological standing being questioned. This has helped reduce the interpersonal frictions within the system. Furthermore, individuals within the Politburo are subjected to crosscutting institutional and personal loyalties.

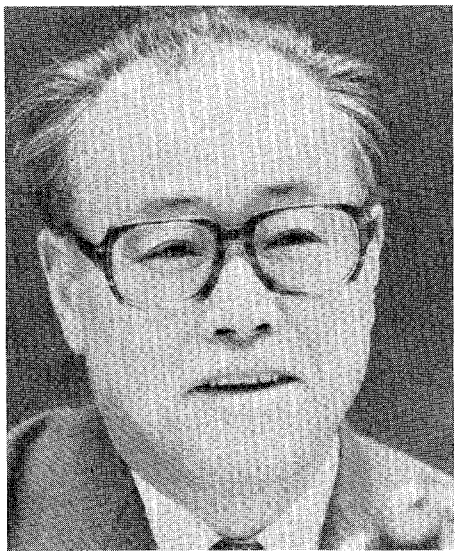
- *Rough policy consensus.* There appears to be a general agreement among members of the Politburo that the policy lines developed by Deng Xiaoping are appropriate and correct. Reorientation of the party's work to economic modernization (rather than class struggle), party rectification and bureaucratic reorganization, pursuit of an "independent" foreign policy, and increasing foreign trade are all issues that have elicited both popular support and elite agreement. Although there are marked differences of opinion and heated arguments over particular aspects of some policies, they have generally not seriously damaged personal relations within the leading group.

- *Systemic loyalty.* In any bureaucracy, the higher one rises in the system, the stronger the loyalty to it. This is clearly the case in the Politburo and other Central Committee decisionmaking organs. Most of their members have experienced the near collapse of the political system, and are determined that it will not happen again. Whatever their personal differences, Politburo members have a strong sense of responsibility about their jobs and a commitment to the survival and improvement of the political/economic system that overrides other concerns.

This is not to say that political strife is absent from the upper levels of the Central Committee. There are fierce debates on economic, political, and ideological issues, contention between those who favor accelerating economic reform and those who want to slow it, and numerous bureaucratic battles over scarce resources and budgetary priorities. In our view, however, these are fundamentally different from factionalism.

How Decisions Are Made

an interview with Premier Zhao Ziyang tend to portray the policy process as orderly and bureaucratically logical. We believe basically accurate, if somewhat flattering to the current regime.



Premier Zhao Ziyang: Recently described China's foreign policy decisionmaking process in unusual detail.

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According to Zhao's remarkably frank comments, the Politburo Standing Committee does not meet as a group, and the Politburo does so only rarely, because of the age and poor health of many Politburo members. Only the weightiest issues—such as the overall direction to be pursued in Sino-US relations—are brought to the attention of China's most senior leaders, and on those occasions, Deng Xiaoping's influence is decisive. In the formulation of foreign policy, as described by Zhao proposals come up through the foreign policy bureaucracy, with critical inputs from quasi-governmental "think tanks" and noted Chinese scholars. A special State Council "small group" (presumably formally designated by the leadership) coordinates foreign policy questions and adjudicates interministerial disputes. If it cannot resolve the issue, it is then passed up to the party's Secretariat (headed by Hu) or the State Council (under Zhao), or to both in joint conference. The party has its own foreign policy "small group," chaired but not dominated by President Li Xiannian, that addresses more sensitive foreign policy issues.

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Propaganda Department Director Deng Liqun: Chief advocate of national campaign against "spiritual pollution."

Politburo member Hu Qiaomu: The party's chief theoretician.

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Deng, in our view, has established a decisionmaking process that effectively bypasses the Politburo. In addition to making the process more efficient, we believe that these procedures also tend to reduce the factional factor in decisionmaking. The Politburo is prone to factionalism because it is composed of veteran party leaders who have risen on the basis of their political power and administrative talents. They are all, in a sense, potential faction leaders because of their extensive personal ties and patron-client relationships within the party bureaucracy.

As far as factional activity is concerned, those in the Politburo who have the prestige and *guanxi* to form serious factions appear to lack the bureaucratic access, the physical stamina, or the willpower to take on Deng Xiaoping. They also have as negative examples Hua Guofeng, Wang Dongxing, Chen Xilian, Wu De, Ji Dengkui, and Wei Guoqing, Politburo leaders who have sought to organize a challenge to Deng and paid a heavy price. The Politburo's propensity for factionalism, but unwillingness to engage in it, can be seen in the 1983 "campaign against spiritual pollution" (see inset).

Factionalism in Society—A Look at the Evidence [4]

Despite the fact that Deng Xiaoping appears to have latent factionalism under control within the Central Committee leadership, it is clear from evidence the party media recently have provided that the problem permeates Chinese society. The campaign to publicize factionalism suggests that the leadership is confident enough about the results of its rectification campaign to risk opening old wounds, but also that it recognizes the hidden dangers of allowing factional animosities to fester in the party bureaucracy.

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Most of the recent articles on factionalism have been carefully written to reflect Beijing's goals for party reform. They generally describe factionalism in small units or localities, link it clearly to the Cultural

[4] Obviously, one must keep in mind when analyzing examples of factionalism provided by the party media that the stories being related are carefully chosen for their didactic value. In some cases, they are written from the perspective of the winner of the factional struggle. Nonetheless, they are useful in illustrating the scope and scale of China's factional problem.

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The Spiritual Pollution Campaign—Factionalism Fizzles

The "campaign to eliminate spiritual pollution," which threw the Chinese political system into turmoil in late 1983, had all the markings of a factional struggle. The issue—the growing influence of modern Western culture and philosophy on a Chinese population long denied knowledge of them—was a highly emotional and symbolic one, lacking in policy specificity. It was raised at a mid-October Central Committee plenum by Deng Xiaoping himself, in response to problems emanating from the "liberal" wing of the party. Deng did not, however, provide specific guidance on the targets for the campaign, or the methods to be used to carry it out; this opened the possibility of competing for the favor of the party's ruling figure by rushing to carry out his perceived wishes.

Propaganda Department head Deng Liqun charged forward with the campaign, using it first as a means to attack certain heterodox writers, and then, with the support of the Politburo's chief theoretician, Hu Qiaomu, to force the ouster of two "liberal" editors of the People's Daily. *By early November, the campaign began to take on policy overtones, with* People's Daily *articles implicitly attacking certain cherished domestic policies, such as agricultural reform, and possibly China's foreign policy tilt toward the United States. At lower levels, the campaign evidently led to retrenchment on "liberal" policies, persecution of unconventional youth, and the reopening of factional battles in various localities. Finally, it appeared that the campaign was being used to undermine the status of General Secretary Hu Yaobang. Some media commentaries seemed obliquely critical of him, and rumors began to circulate that Hu and Deng had fallen out, and even that Deng had begun looking for another successor. Hong Kong's* Zhengming *magazine eventually claimed Deng Liqun and Hu Qiaomu were involved in an attempt to weaken Hu Yaobang.*

Hu Yaobang reportedly called a Politburo meeting prior to his 23 November visit to Japan, at which the negative results of the campaign were brought to Deng Xiaoping's attention. Deng ordered that the campaign be limited to literary and theoretical areas, and that it be strictly separated from practical policy. In late November and early December, Deng Liqun and the head of the military commissariat set out strict guidelines limiting the campaign.

But although spiritual pollution receded from the main policy arenas by the beginning of 1984, the campaign continued with great intensity in the theoretical realm so closely watched by China's intellectuals. In mid-January, Hu Qiaomu wrote a long theoretical exposition refuting liberal interpretations of Marxism. Despite the regime's intent that Hu's article be the final word on the subject, it aroused more protest and criticism of its theoretical inconsistencies and perpetuated the bitterness that the campaign had injected into the political atmosphere.

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Deng Xiaoping had finally had enough. 25X1

he retracted the portions of his October speech dealing with spiritual pollution (which had never been published, in any case) and criticized the propaganda apparatus for its clumsy execution of the campaign. It was expected that Deng Liqun would be fired as Propaganda Department Director, but he held on to his job, probably because the party leadership did not want to project an image of disarray. In June, Zhao Ziyang declared the "spiritual pollution" issue to have been "successfully" concluded. Since then, the "reformist" line associated with Hu and Zhao has advanced strongly, controversial new economic and social policies have been adopted, and propaganda units have been specifically instructed that their work is to support the reforms.

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Did Deng Liqun, thinking he had the support of other party elders, such as Chen Yun, Wang Zhen, and Peng Zhen, attempt to weaken Hu Yaobang? Did a "reformist faction" of Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang, Wan Li, and Hu Qili counterattack in late November? The evidence is inconclusive and fully illustrates the difficulty of analyzing factional activity. One point is very clear, however: Deng Xiaoping decided the outcome of the campaign. He set it in motion, and he ended it. His unchallengeable authority put a stop to whatever factionalization was taking place in the Politburo. He appears to have protected both Hu Yaobang and Deng Liqun from each other. We believe that the seeds of factionalism—personal animosities, teaming up for defense, and emotional treatment of obscure issues—were sown but that Deng's intervention prevented growth. Party unity was preserved, factionalism withered.

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Mixing It Up at the Xian City Cement Factory

According to a 6 April article in Renmin Ribao, *the Xian City Cement Factory was a sorely troubled unit. Established in 1970, its leadership had been changed eight times by 1979, yet it still could not produce enough cement to turn a profit. The fault lay with one Li Naiheng, a "cement specialist" who evidently knew little about cement. In 1980, the Xian City party committee placed a vacancy notice for Li's job, and hired a university graduate named Hu Zhaoming to help get the plant in operation. Hu did so by appointing seven other technical specialists to management positions, and they oversaw the repair of facilities and supervised production. The plant soon began producing high-quality cement and earning profits for the state.*

Li Naiheng, however, was part of an important local faction. Taking advantage of his connections above and below, he spread rumors on the shop floor, got a friend in the local press to spike a commendatory article about the new factory management, colluded with quality inspectors to declare the plant's output substandard, and ultimately persuaded the city party committee to recall Hu Zhaoming. After Hu's departure, his fellow technicians were dismissed or idled.

In their place, several people who had risen to prominence during the Cultural Revolution were appointed to direct the factory's operations, despite their lack of technical qualifications. The result, of course, was disastrous. By 1983, output was down, losses topped a million yuan, and the plant faced bankruptcy. Despite their failure, the "leftist" managers were protected by a bureau chief in the Xian municipal party committee, crony of Li Naiheng and himself a Cultural Revolution star. At the time of writing, despite exposes written by local and national magazines and newspapers, the problem had not been resolved. Hu Yaobang subsequently commented on the article, and, although we do not yet know the outcome in the Xian City Cement Factory, the municipal party committee has come in for more than its share of central criticism in the party press.

Revolution, and show how it prevents the effective implementation of economic or political reform policies. The articles have strong "good vs. evil" overtones, and make the point that factionalism is a product of weak leadership by implying that higher party authorities often do not attend to the problem until investigative journalists bring it to their attention. Despite the "official expose" aspect and clear central guidance for discussing such problems, the articles are a rich source of information on factionalism and, by careful reading, permit "nonofficial" conclusions to be drawn (see insets).

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Several characteristics of local factionalism seem to stand out in an analysis of these recent official accounts:

- Factions are joined by deliberate choice. Members are known to each other, as well as to interested political observers on the scene.

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- Power is the goal; the issues over which factional battles are fought usually are personnel issues, unrelated to policy. Although purported factionalists are routinely accused of policy-related shortcomings, these are usually secondary concerns, though Beijing gives them propaganda priority.

- Factions depend for their survival on strong ties to higher levels of party leadership. The winners of a factional struggle are invariably those who have the more powerful backing at higher levels. The higher the "*guanxi* networks" of faction leaders extend, the stronger the factional unit.

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- Factionalism is pervasive in society and is remarkably resistant to cleanup efforts. Officials tasked with eliminating it often end up victims of factional intrigues. Beijing's preferred method for solving factional problems at local levels is to transfer factional leaders to other areas, thus disrupting their *guanxi* networks, although there is no reporting on the overall success of this method. Punishment for factional activity is usually light, despite the evidence of related crimes.

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Rats in the Grain Bureau—Shuangya City, Heilongjiang

A February Renmin Ribao *expose by a well-known reformist journalist gave a detailed look at factionalism in a small unit. Chief malefactors in the case were Yin Haijiang, secretary of the party committee of the Shuangya municipal grain bureau, and Duan Lianxi, head of the organization (personnel) section of the bureau. In 1978, Duan had been accused of Cultural Revolution crimes, including murder, but Yin protected him from investigation. Both had been members of the "upstairs faction" during the Cultural Revolution. Described as "political and personnel specialists," the upstairs faction had easily and thoroughly defeated the technical experts of the "downstairs faction."*

After the Cultural Revolution, the Yin and Duan faction maintained and augmented their power through bribery and extortion. Their abuse of privilege became well known throughout the city. Extravagant dinner parties, gift-giving, and other forms of corruption proliferated. Investigations were done by various party organs, but Duan and Yin were protected by a deputy secretary of the Shuangya City party committee, whose brother had been given a job by Duan. Over time, Duan and Yin ruined the careers of many of their political enemies and set back both the quality and quantity of flour production. Although they drew the attention of the Central Discipline Inspection Commission, the investigation dragged on for several years, during which time the chief investigator found himself under attack by other factional elements in Heilongjiang Province. The article ended with the implication that the case had not been resolved.

A County Takeover in Shandong

In February, Xinhua *announced that Shandong Province had decided to reorganize the party committee of Chengwu County, which had been "controlled by a few people with serious factionalist influence and lawbreakers, who used their power to form factions and cliques, seek personal gains and violate law and discipline." Three individuals were singled out as the worst violators: Ai Fuhua, Lu Maijun and Cai Xiangcun. Cultural Revolution beneficiaries, they were transferred to Chengwu in 1978 and immediately began to organize and expand a factional network. By 1980, when the county elected a new party committee, they had gained enough support to be elected to leading positions, defeating "four conscientious and honest candidates."*

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Once in office, they "abused their power to seek personal gains and willfully squandered and embezzled state resources." They also proceeded to ignore important central policy decisions, particularly in the area of agriculture. As a result, production suffered, per capita income declined, and valuable forest lands were destroyed. For three years, the province sent investigation teams to the county in response to local complaints, but not until the Central Discipline Inspection Commission investigated in late 1983 did anything get done. With pressure from Beijing, the provincial and prefectural authorities decided to crack down. In the end, the county magistrate, four members of the county party committee, and a vice chairman of the local people's congress were dismissed from office. Only one, however, was expelled from the party.

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- Blatant factionalism diminishes with proximity to and opposition from superior authority. It also appears to be more prevalent and more intense at lower levels of bureaucracy.

Moving Up the Line: Factionalism in the Provinces

Given the party's desire to portray factionalism as a discipline problem left over from the Cultural Revolution, Beijing has been considerably more circumspect in discussing factionalism within provincial party committees. Provincial party committees have been reorganized several times since 1976, with Beijing always having the final word on important appointments. The most recent reorganizations took place in early 1983 and brought to prominence a number of younger, well-educated technocrats with strong reformist credentials, reportedly handpicked by Deng. For Beijing to admit that these new leading bodies had factional problems would be tantamount to advertising its own lack of influence.

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Guangxi Province: Local Factions and Central Support

Scene of some of the Cultural Revolution's bloodiest fighting, with Red Guards stealing munitions from trains bound for North Vietnam, Guangxi has never fully recovered from its violent past. Members of the rival "April 22" and "headquarters" factions have preserved their animosities over the years. Wei Guoqing, a conservative Guangxi native, generally sided with the "headquarters" faction, but actually ran the province with an iron PLA hand. As he moved on to higher office in the party and army, ultimately becoming head of the PLA commissariat—the General Political Department, Wei appointed cronies to run Guangxi. Although an early Deng supporter, Wei reportedly grew increasingly unhappy with Deng's reforms. Like-minded supporters in Guangxi, believing they had Wei's support, appear to have stymied the implementation of reformist economic and education policies in the province. [redacted]

Evidently concerned with Wei's dual support base in the PLA General Political Department and Guangxi, Deng removed Wei from his military job in late 1982, and reorganized the Guangxi provincial party committee in early 1983, leaving First Secretary Qiao Xiaoguang as the sole surviving Wei appointee. Newly appointed Deputy Secretary Wei Chunshu was put in charge of party rectification in the province, with the additional task of resolving "problems left over from the Cultural Revolution." In the face of opposition from both factions, Wei proved unequal to the tasks, despite help from a large workteam dispatched by Beijing. [redacted] 25X1

In January 1984, Hu Yaobang visited the province for several weeks, and delivered direct guidance on resolving the problems. In short order, the Guangxi party committee gave more power to Wei Chunshu, began criticizing its own shortcomings in rectification and reform, and denounced the errors of "former party committees" (without directly mentioning Wei Guoqing). The province's progress was carefully monitored in the pages of People's Daily, *which carried reports of the arrest of several prominent Cultural Revolution leaders in March, critical commentaries on the province's factionalism in May, and finally, Qiao Xiaoguang's mild self-criticism in August. As this campaign progressed, Wei Guoqing dropped out of sight. It would not be surprising to see him removed from the Politburo at a future Central Committee meeting.* [redacted] 25X1 25X1

Provincial response to Beijing's call to publicize factional problems has been mixed. Several provinces have been relatively silent, giving little publicity to factional problems at any level. Others, such as Shandong, Henan, and Shanxi, have taken specific steps to correct factional abuses at lower levels, including the mass transfers of county-level officials. Still others, most notably Guangxi and Hunan, have "gone public" with their factional problems, although they have been very careful to avoid mentioning names or directly implicating current leaders. Generally, the provinces that have discussed their factional problems most openly have been those whose party committees are documented as containing "leftist" supporters of Politburo members now in disgrace. [redacted]

The contrast between Guangxi Province and Fujian provides a striking example of Beijing's selective approach to exposing factional problems (see insets). Guangxi's party first secretary is a follower of Politburo member Wei Guoqing, whose star is currently declining due to his opposition to some elements of Deng's reform program. Guangxi's factional problems are discussed frequently in local and national media. Fujian's first secretary is a protege of General Secretary Hu Yaobang and may be slated for higher national office. Fujian's factional problems, no less serious than Guangxi's, have received very little national media attention. [redacted] 25X1

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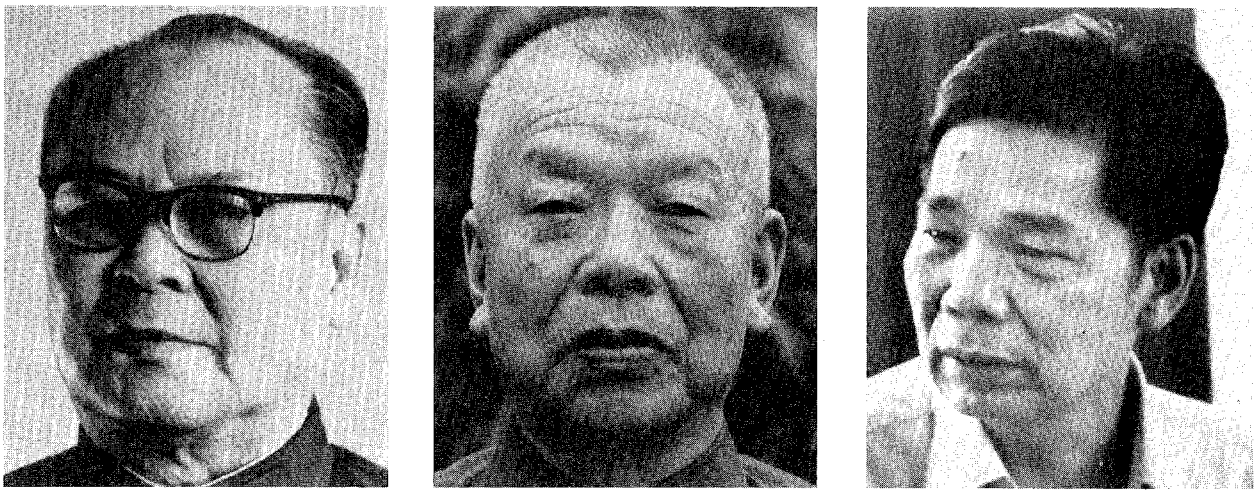

Guangxi's power brokers: (left to right) Politburo member Wei Guoqing, Provincial Party First Secretary Qiao Xiaoguang, and Deputy Secretary Wei Chunshu. 25X1

PLA Factions—An Untold Story

Given its organizational structure and personnel policies, the PLA is particularly susceptible to factionalism. Promotion patterns within the army would almost seem to guarantee high degrees of cronyism: typically, an individual will stay within the same army corps throughout his entire career. There are numerous documented examples of commanders promoting their staffs along with them as they rise through the hierarchy. In contrast to local party units, however, the army until recently has staunchly rejected charges that it was factionalized. With regard to the Cultural Revolution, PLA commentaries tended to maintain the fiction that the army was aloof from Cultural Revolution struggles, that its participation in "support the left" activities in local areas during that period was ordered by Beijing, and that army officers usually played the role of neutral arbiter, not active participant.

More recent articles in PLA newspapers have admitted that the PLA's facts as well as attitudes were incorrect, and that the army was as immersed in factionalism and as guilty of serious political errors during the Cultural Revolution as any other group. Furthermore, by refusing to admit their errors, PLA units have tended to perpetuate them, and factionalism has remained a deep-rooted problem. Army leaders have also been forced to recognize that their attitude won them few friends among civilians, many of whom suffered career or personal setbacks while the army was in charge. 25X1

Most articles about factionalism in the military have discussed the problem in generic terms, rather than in detail. have been unable to 25X1
provide much further information on the nature of factional struggles within the armed forces. Some local military units have admitted that they had taken part in "miscarriages of justice," or incorrectly supported leftists in local governments, and have apologized to their civilian counterparts in public meetings. 25X1

As far as factionalism within units is concerned, the most explicit description of a problem has been that of 25X1
the General Logistics Department (GLD). In late August, *People's Daily* reported that the GLD had resolved "conspicuous differences" and serious organizational and interpersonal problems in the course of "negating the Cultural Revolution." After holding

Fujian Province: The Persistence of Factional Feuds

Although the Cultural Revolution in Fujian was not as violent as in Guangxi, the factional rivalries were equally intense, and considerably more complex. In addition to the two primary Cultural Revolution–generated factions, the "red faction" and the "black faction" (which ultimately dominated), the provincial leadership has long been divided between the "Shanxi faction," consisting of Shanxi-born officials who transferred to Fujian in the late 1940s, and the "underground faction" of native Fujianese revolutionaries. To complicate matters, Fujian is a Military Region (MR) headquarters, and successive MR leaders have dominated or dabbled in local politics to varying degrees.

vicious factional infighting down to the county level; local leaders taking advantage of a leadership change in Beijing to jail opponents on trumped-up charges; fighting over control of economic bureaucracies to the point that they are immobilized. Fujian's former provincial first secretary, weakened by poor health, finally quit trying to resolve factional difficulties after repeated failures.

Fujian's current party leader, Xiang Nan, reportedly has made some progress in straightening out factional squabbles. The new party committee put in place in early 1983 seems to have been designed to mollify the existing factions, while giving more power to Xiang and other new leaders untainted by old battles. Nonetheless, Xiang's own son told US officials in Hong Kong that the province is still plagued by factionalism. The "Shanxi faction," which has resisted economic and political reform efforts, is still strongly represented on the provincial party committee, and continues to hamper Xiang's efforts to run the province efficiently. At the lower levels, "red" and "black" faction members continue to vie for power and privilege. Perhaps not surprisingly, Fujian's economic performance is not cited as a national model, and Xiang has publicly criticized his own performance in economic reform. Fujian's record, however, has not been criticized by Beijing in the way Guangxi's has. Hu Yaobang, Premier Zhao Ziyang and other central leaders have visited the province in the past two years, but Xiang's performance has won nothing but praise.

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extensive meetings and "heart-to-heart talks" with division leaders, animosities and factional viewpoints that dated to the early part of the Cultural Revolution were reportedly dispelled. A *People's Daily* commentator praised the GLD's method of handling old problems as a model for the party to follow. In our judgment, however, most PLA participants in the political strife of the Cultural Revolution remain reluctant to admit their mistakes, and the party is giving the army great credit for small progress.

Central Ministries and Departments: Houses Divided

Although incomplete and vague, there is substantial evidence that factionalism occasionally is a serious problem within State Council ministries and Central Committee departments. In the recent drive to resolve factional problems nationwide, media attention has focused on the Ministry of Coal Industry and the Ministry of Railways, which were claimed to have successfully addressed their Cultural Revolution problems and eliminated residual factional bitterness. Although in their study sessions the ministries discussed factional problems in great detail, no accurate accounts have been published in the party press.

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Among the central units that appear to be

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Fujian First Secretary Xiang Nan: Trying to bring the factions under control.

most seriously affected by factional problems are the party Propaganda Department, the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade, the Ministry of State Security, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see inset).

The Future of Factionalism

Although we believe that Deng Xiaoping has effectively contained the centrifugal forces that exist within the Central Committee, and has set China on a course that steers clear of the social and political excesses that polarized the society under Mao, we do not believe that he has solved the problem of factionalism. He has not institutionalized effective channels of conflict resolution, nor has he dispersed power to a degree that will preclude some form of power struggle from emerging after his death.

In our judgment, Hu Yaobang is making important progress in preparing to succeed to Deng's power from his strong position as General Secretary. He is taking bold policy initiatives that enhance his reputation for leadership without jeopardizing his relationship with Deng. Hu also seems to be strengthening his own power base. He has placed people reputed to be his proteges (based on career associations in the Chinese Youth League) into important positions within the party's Secretariat, Organization Department, and General Office. He is strengthening his influence in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and National Defense through appointments of supporters to key positions. Although these actions improve his power position in the long run, they also create tensions. They leave him vulnerable to charges that he is engaging in factionalism, and, without Deng's support, Hu might find himself faced with a Politburo determined to limit his powers by destroying his "faction." 25X1

Hu Yaobang's power thus far has been conferred upon him. He has enhanced and expanded it somewhat, but he has faced no serious challenge to his authority without Deng's power behind him. Hu's uncertain personal power base, his reputation as a rather impulsive leader, his association with the party's controversial "liberal" wing, and the continued influence of several other senior party veterans may permit a reemergence of factionalism in a post-Deng era. 25X1 25X1

Given our limited access to the Chinese leadership, and the necessary secrecy in which factions cloak their activity, it is unlikely that we will be able to develop a clear picture of post-Deng factional alignments. Because factions are based on interpersonal relationships and *guanxi* networks, they can emerge for any number of reasons. Hu's use of his powers may cause an opposition faction to coalesce around another leader of his generation or around a party veteran who believes Hu to be unsuited for power.[5] Or it may involve Hu himself engaging in more obvious factional activity as a defense against a potential challenge. Another possibility is an escalation of a struggle between two other members of the Politburo that Hu was unable or unwilling to resolve, resulting in the polarization of the leadership. 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1

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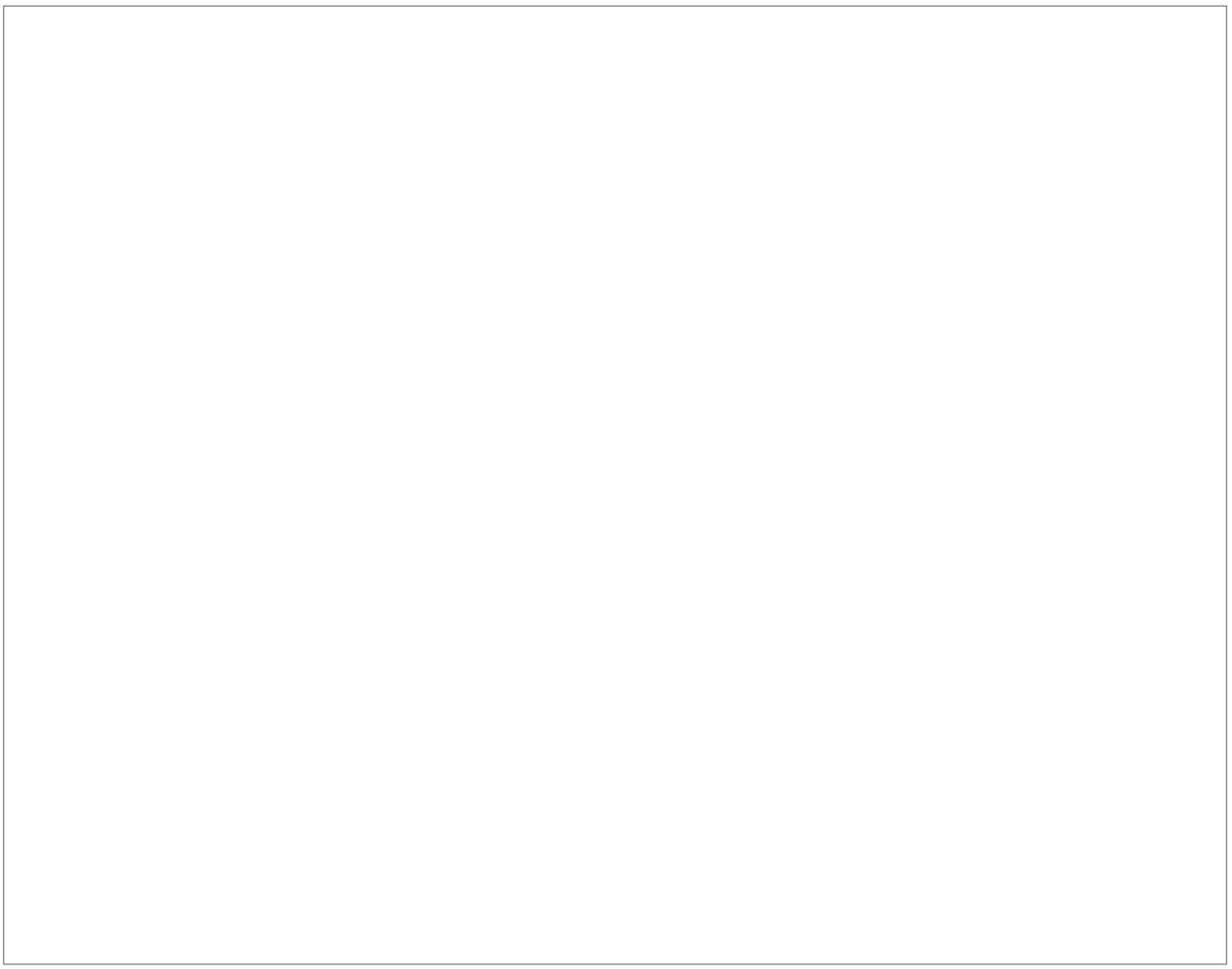

We do not foresee the Politburo inevitably breaking up into competing factions upon Deng's death. The policymaking process that has emerged recently seems to be effective and satisfactory to most of the leadership.

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Factionalization can be a slow process, a progressive deterioration of the cohesiveness and competence of the leadership over time. It appears to go through several stages, some of which have observable characteristics:

- *Concentration on ideological or symbolic issues.* Such issues lend themselves more easily to factional manipulation intended to weaken perceived opponents. Examples could include constantly shifting the discussion of US-China textile disagreements to the question of "national dignity," or transforming a debate on economic reform policy into an issue of "socialism versus capitalism."



Faction leaders in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: (left to right) former Minister Huang Hua, former Minister Ji Pengfei, and current Minister Wu Xueqian.

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- *Heightened personalization of political discourse.* Policies become associated with particular leaders, and support for those policies equates to support for the leader. The success or failure of the policy reflects less on the correctness of the policy than on the abilities of the leader who proposed it. Indicators in this phase are usually negative ones, such as media articles extolling the "unity and stability" of the central leadership in the face of rumors to the contrary. Historical allegories about leaders of past dynasties may also appear.

- *Polarization of the leadership.* Opposition becomes programmatic—a "two-line struggle;" interpersonal tensions are beyond mediation or meaningful cooperation between two factions; neutral leaders are put under increasing pressure to choose sides. Factions become more open in this phase and may be given descriptive names. Policies become more cautious; important personnel decisions may be delayed.

- *Plots and intrigues.* Personnel issues become deadlocked; bureaucratic vacancies cannot be filled. Factions are clearly known. All parties try to ensure some form of physical security, either through public security or military forces. Political activity increases in all bureaucracies, as factional networks spread downward. The entire decisionmaking process becomes paralyzed pending the outcome of the struggle.

- *Denouement.* The battle is joined when one faction is convinced it has the power necessary to defeat its opposition. This usually takes place at a Politburo or expanded Politburo meeting. The losers suffer some form of political disgrace, including being charged with factionalism.

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Conclusions . . .

The party's current effort to "eradicate" factionalism is indicative of the scope and seriousness of the problem at all levels of China's bureaucracies. Beijing is clearly aware that factions have done enormous damage to the political system since the Cultural Revolution by:

- Obstructing policy implementation.
- Blocking effective communication upward in the bureaucracy.
- Promoting corrupt and incompetent personnel while preventing better educated persons from becoming cadre.
- Engaging in flagrant abuse of power and corruption, thereby damaging the party's prestige.

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Hu and Deng: Can Hu control the political system as well as Deng has, or will he face a factional challenge?

Given the tendency of factionalism to recede in the face of power exerted from above and the shaming effect of national publicity, we believe Beijing's anti-factionalism campaign will achieve a measure of success in improving bureaucratic performance at lower levels. To the degree that deep animosities left over from the Cultural Revolution are ameliorated, the party's purposes will also be well served. In our judgment, however, factionalism is too pervasive in society to be quickly eliminated by a party publicity campaign.

Despite its prevalence in the society at large, factionalism does not appear to be a serious problem within the current Politburo leadership. Deng Xiaoping has established workable, stable policymaking procedures that have reduced interpersonal tensions within the system by dispersing power to several bureaucracies. He has also shifted more authority away from the Politburo to the younger, more activist and cohesive party Secretariat. By virtue of his own political strength, Deng has quelled the emergence of power-seeking factions at the top.

Hu's prospects for maintaining a leadership group in which factionalism plays a limited role will depend upon political changes still to be accomplished by the Deng reform coalition. If Hu can bring more of his supporters and fellow reformists into the Secretariat and Politburo (that is, strengthen his own potential faction) and succeed to Deng's real power position, he may be able to prevent opposition from coalescing. If current reformist policies continue to achieve satisfactory results, the regime may be able to dampen the kinds of recriminations and blame-laying that accompany failed policies and sometimes degenerate into factionalism. If Deng can bring about the true retirement of a significant number of the aged veterans who still dominate the Politburo, potential post-Deng factional networks will be diminished in strength. These are formidable challenges for Deng and Hu, and are the essence of their political reform program. The more successful they are in achieving their political goals, the more likely the regime will be able to contain the impulse to factionalism that has hampered China's political and economic development in the past.

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And Implications for the United States

The linkage between factional politics and any particular policy issue is often difficult to draw. Factions tend to coalesce over power and personnel questions, rather than specific issue areas. Differences over specific policies can contribute to the factionalization process, as disagreements among Chinese leaders tend to get personalized readily, but a single policy issue is unlikely to precipitate a full-scale factional battle. This is particularly true of foreign policy issues, which are handled by a smaller number of senior officials who think in geopolitical terms and generally seek to insulate foreign policy from the push and pull of domestic politics.

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The Chinese, in fact, have played occasionally on Western concerns about their factionalism to gain tactical advantages in dealing with bilateral problems. An example of this sort of manipulation occurred in 1982, when Chinese diplomats hinted that Deng's position would be jeopardized if the United States decided to sell advanced fighters to Taiwan. We also believe that hints from Chinese officials that "factional infighting" was the cause of a policy position unfavorable to the United States should be viewed with skepticism.

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This is not to say that foreign policy questions are immune to factional considerations. The handling of China's foreign policy could become part of factional infighting, particularly as a leader under pressure for other reasons might be blamed for perceived failings in the management of China's foreign relations. Given their high emotional content, some aspects of Sino-US relations could get drawn into an ongoing factional squabble, with accompanying rhetorical excess on the part of the Chinese. We believe, however, that this need not be cause for great concern. Even if factionalism within the Politburo shifts the balance of power among the leaders, this will not inevitably affect Chinese leaders' perceptions of their national interest, or of the nature and direction of their relationship with the United States. In the past, major factional changes have taken place without any great shifts in Chinese foreign policy, and, conversely, major changes in Chinese foreign policy have been made without any factional realignment.

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